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SUBJECT: ECOSOC 2006 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION: COORDINATION
SEGMENT

REF: GENEVA 1699 (NOTAL)

11. (U) Summary: The Coordination Segment (CS) of ECOSOC's Substantive Session met July 6-10 and again on July 17 in Geneva. The Coordination Segment theme "Sustained economic growth for social development, including poverty eradication and hunger" had strong thematic links to the High Level Segment (HLS) see reftel) which focused on employment issues and treated employment as a key route out of poverty. The CS required more time than usual to conclude due to prolonged negotiations on the segments resolution, which was finally approved on July 17. Delegations meeting in New York in June failed to agree on the need for a resolution, but in Geneva parties agreed that a short, focused and balanced resolution made sense. A side event on avian flu (see septel) was also held July 10 during the Segment. End Summary.

12. (U) This year's ECOSOC Coordination Segment (CS) assumed a relatively low profile. It appears that ongoing New York negotiations in June over the Development follow-up resolution (A/60/L59) and the ECOSOC HLS Ministerial Declaration drew much of the focus away from preparations for this segment. The CS theme "Sustained economic growth for social development, including poverty eradication and hunger" appeared to a number of delegations to be a repetition of numerous debates held in the GA's Second Committee over the fall of 2005. The Secretary General's report for this Segment (E/2006/56 - Sustained economic growth for social development, including poverty eradication and hunger) described the debate between the "human development" approach and the "pro-poor growth" approach, and generated a set of recommendations on coordination and policy coherence that could fit into nearly any UN report on development policy. It conspicuously downplayed the importance of democratic governance as a necessary component of such growth.

13. (U) Consensus on a Coordination Resolution: Following several false starts in New York, negotiators on a resolution to reinforce the Coordination theme finally engaged in Geneva in a constructive process that led to consensus. On the margins of a third informal session, the U.S., EU, G-77 and Switzerland agreed to scrap a draft text that was overloaded with policy prescriptions in favor of a concise, technical resolution aimed at implementation of the ECOSOC theme. The facilitator (Iceland) produced a clean draft. The Coordination Segment resolution, which an ECOSOC plenary adopted by consensus on July 17 (E/2006/14), recognizes that the inter-linkages between economic growth and social development are complex and require both sound national development strategies and more effective guidance from the UN. The resolution urges the UN to align its studies and assistance with national priorities for social development. Closing the CS after the resolution was adopted July 17,

ECOSOC President Hachani presented and the ECOSOC approved an oral decision to defer to a resumed session the finalization of a multi-year program of work for the CS, and to take note of the SYG's report E/2006/56 (discussed on July 6).

14. (U) Alongside the negotiations for a resolution described above a range of discussions made up the 2006 CS. Brief summaries follow:

A) General Debate: The general debate that opened the CS meeting July 6 focused on managing the interaction between economic growth and social development, and explaining what the UN might do to help to spur such linkages. ECOSOC Vice President Ambassador Hannesson (Iceland) and Assistant SYG for Policy Coordination Civili opened the debate, which featured statements from nine delegations. A/SYG Civili appeared to give more importance to the need for "policy space" than to correct policy choices by developing countries. The U.S. statement stressed that policy decisions matter, a point which elicited support from many delegations. The U.S. also highlighted the need to allow the private sector flexibility to operate in support of development, instead of becoming a hobble by excessive regulation. The G77 statement was unusual in that it lauded the recently approved General Assembly Development Follow-up resolution, and focused heavily on what it called the new reporting requirements contained therein. The G77 also stressed that the CS is an important ECOSOC element and should not be reduced in length when ECOSOC reform proceeds, a topic that has been under discussion among delegations in New York. In its statement, the EU focused on the need to avoid "jobless, rootless and faceless growth," arguing that social policies are not simply an "add-on" to macroeconomic policy, but a key component of development policy.

B) Dialogue with Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions: The Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions briefed ECOSOC July 6 on labor market developments in their regions. While the Asia and the Pacific region primarily faced a "jobless growth" situation with a few positive exceptions, Latin America faced insufficient overall growth, at below 4.5 percent, to impact the labor market. The cluster of issues involving social protection in Latin America also needed more sustained support from donors and governments. Africa posted overall growth of 5.3 percent last year, but there was little trickle down impact and poverty rates and the use of child labor remained too high. The Middle East was likewise lagging in new job creation and faced an exploding youth population, for which jobs had to be created. The Executive Secretary for Western Asia warned of an inefficient education/training system in the region and of an influx of immigrants from Asia. Finally the Economic Commission for Europe noted strong employment prospects in some transition economies in the former CIS but considerable problems in Central Europe, where unemployment was closer to 10 percent. He noted that the former CIS countries had learned from Central Europe's mistakes about the proper sequencing of economic and labor market reforms. In his intervention, Ambassador Miller noted the Executive Secretaries painted a gloomier picture of the employment market and economic progress than statistical data and trends suggested.

C) Panel Discussion with Executive Secretaries of the Functional Commissions: This July 7 panel discussion featured chairs or co-chairs from various ECOSOC functional commissions such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) the Commission for Social Development (CSD), the Statistical Commission and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Personnel from the Functional Commissions explained their specific approaches to their mandates. The panel discussion highlighted the lack of coherence among the commissions and confirmed suspicions that ECOSOC was not performing an adequate coordinating/guiding role, especially now that UN reform was moving forward. A number of delegations highlighted the fact that although

ECOSOC was responsible for overall policy guidance to the commissions, it had failed to provide real direction. Ambassador Miller echoed these views and noted that ECOSOC members themselves needed to do more to address the incoherent approach of the functional commissions to their work programs, a key task of the Coordination Segment.

D) Panel Discussion entitled "Sustained economic growth for social development and the eradication of poverty:" This July 7 event featured a mix of government representatives (UK, Uganda), UN representatives, and NGOs. Countries reviewed their experience as donors or aid recipients but the discussion was clearly biased towards the "pro-poor" growth model, noting economic growth in itself was insufficient to handle social needs. A representative from the Geneva-based "South Center" gave a 1970's style presentation on the need for the developing world to carve out substantially more "policy space" and to aim for "resource sovereignty" so that natural resources can be used to benefit the poor in developing countries. The need for a democratic political system to support the interests of the poor in national development programs was not addressed in these presentations, until Ambassador Miller noted the concept's conspicuous absence. He also challenged a number of the presentations for using statistics selectively to support their arguments.

5 (U) Avian flu Event: The ECOSOC event drew together representatives from a number of organizations, including the WHO, UNDP, ICAO, the World Bank and the World Tourism Organization, who detailed their preparations for a possible widespread outbreak among humans, and their responses to the illness among poultry. Attention was drawn to the spread of the problem to Africa, and the weakness of the veterinary and health delivery systems in Africa. Successes in containing the disease in Europe and East Asia were attributed to good communications with the public and early alerts to farmers, and a strong veterinary response. The resources pledged at Beijing (before the spread to Africa) are unlikely to be sufficient to deal with the poultry problem in Africa. There were calls for the development and distribution of affordable vaccines (see septel for expanded report).
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